

EXHIBIT

DATE

Feb. 6, 2013

HB9

Mister Chairman, members of the committee, for the record, my name is Sandra Culhane. I am the Executive Director of the Billings Symphony Orchestra and Chorale in Billings. I am testifying on behalf of the Billings Symphony Orchestra and Chorale's 2014-2015 application for the Cultural Trust grant, requesting the reinstatement of funding at our past biennial amount of \$11,376. This would provide operational support funding to enable us to continue 62 years of artistic excellence and educational initiatives for the eastern Montana region.

We believe that our funding request was denied on a technicality, and we have prepared information for you today to address the issues that were brought up in review. First, the listing of "Montana Arts Council" as an asset on our balance sheet is consistent with past year's listings, and reflects one of our general endowment accounts. We have since moved our endowment accounts to the management of Merrill Lynch, and have renamed that account to avoid any future confusion. We have also distributed clear print-outs of our profit and loss statements for both fiscal years: 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, which were difficult for the committee to read. We apologize for this, and can only state that this was the first year that the budgets were submitted via scanned copy; in the past we completed a budget form provided by the Montana Arts Council. We will take better care in the future to make sure that our copies are clearer to read.

You will also see information on our 62nd season of concerts at the Alberta Bair Theater and on our 15 Explore Music! education and community engagement activities. Our organization is a vibrant part of southeastern Montana and northwestern Wyoming. If you attend church or synagogue, you will notice that a majority of the people providing music in these forums are either alumni or current members of the Billings Symphony chorale and orchestra, and that they are often led by a member of our organization. Music educators in the public school systems at all levels again are often members of our orchestra. The fact is, the Billings Symphony is an intrinsic part of this community – we are the ranchers, bankers, car part distributors, public school teachers, private lesson teachers, and home school teachers. We are tied together by music, and some of our members have branched out into the Yellowstone Chamber Players, the pit orchestra for the Rimrock Opera, and are reaching even further with their own outreach efforts. I believe that the Billings Symphony provides the training and venue for people to perfect their musical craft – whether violin, voice, or trumpet – which in turn is carried forward to the community as a whole.

Speaking of outreach and access, do you know that the Billings Symphony will reach over 40,000 people through our performances this year alone? Since September we have presented over 40 outreach programs to 4000 seniors, children, and underserved audiences. This is in addition to the 7,200 people who heard our performances at the Alberta Bair. In January alone we led 15 outreach services – Boys and Girls Club visits, free performances on January 25th for schoolchildren bussed in from Lockwood, Elder Grove, Shepherd, St. Charles Mission, Hardin, and Lame Deer Schools amongst others, 2 full houses of our Trout Fishing in America concert – at the ABT. Our feedback that these outreach programs are working comes in the form of over 500 letters from children, some of which I share with you now, and from the letters to the editor and private letters we received from school teachers, from parents, from the outlying areas we reach.

I can tell you that 5% of our concert audience comes from 100 miles or further – with many from 200-300 miles. 13% of our orchestra does the same. We are providing a unique service, not just to Billings, but to greater Montana.

The money we receive from the Cultural and Aesthetic Grant allows us to continue our 62 year history of providing excellent music and access to the eastern Montana region. It is integral to the cultural richness of our community and an influencing factor to those looking to relocate to our communities. We are a positive impact to the economy, and many of our attendees travel to our concerts and spend time and money at local hotels, restaurants, and shopping. The vibrant arts culture of Billings is a strong selling point to people choosing Billings, and needs to be sustained and nurtured. Please continue to support us in our efforts and support our reinstatement for funding– it's a good investment in Billings and a good investment in Montana.

Taylor Brown

From: Sandra Culhane <sandra@billingssymphony.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 05, 2013 12:56 PM
To: Taylor Brown
Cc: 'Candy Holzer'
Subject: 2.6.13 printed testimony
Attachments: 2.6.13 printed testimony.doc

Hello again, Taylor,

I've attached my testimony for tomorrow morning. We have prepared packets for the committee, and will look forward to seeing you at 8am. Candy and I will be leaving Billings in a few hours, and will be staying at the Hampton Inn tonight. My cell phone is 406-672-4086 should you need to reach us before tomorrow.

Please let me know if there are any other materials you would like for us to provide for you. I can re-send the "facts and figures" document that I sent earlier. It is in the packets for distribution, and has metrics and information which illustrates the impact of our organization.

With thanks,
Sandi

Sandra Culhane, Executive Director; Billings Symphony Orchestra & Chorale www.billingssymphony.org

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